



Area Agency on Aging, PSA 2

Caregiving Series

MAKING THE HOME SENIOR-FRIENDLY

Mom and Dad want to stay in their own home, but I worry about their safety. What if one of them falls?

People live longer than they used to and want to remain in their own home as long as possible, however the home that met their needs years ago may not be safe or comfortable now. Great strides have been made in designing and retrofitting homes to allow greater freedom and access for people with limitations and disabilities. A safety check and simple changes will make that home senior-friendly.

Throughout the Home

- Are handrails securely fastened on both sides of all stairways?
- Are all interior areas, including stairways and hallways, well lit?
- Are switches easy to operate?
- Are entrances and exits well lit?
- Is a telephone accessible at all times, including in the bathroom?
- Are outside doors protected by security locks that can be easily operated?
- Are there smoke detectors on each floor and a carbon monoxide detector in the bedroom?
- Are batteries replaced on a regular basis?
- Are floors and steps free of cords and clutter?
- Are thresholds flush with the floor to prevent tripping?

Bathroom

- Are there secure grab bars for the tub and shower, and near the toilet?
- Do the tub and shower have non-slip surfaces?
- Can hot and cold water be controlled with one handle?
- Is the hot water heater set to prevent scalding?
- Can the door be opened from the outside in case someone falls?
- Is there a night light?

Kitchen

- Can frequently used items be reached without using a chair or stool?
- Are heavy pots and pans stored below counters?
- Can hot and cold water be controlled with one handle?
- Is there ample general lighting and task lighting?
- Is a fire extinguisher within easy reach of the stove?
- Is there a work area where a person can sit while preparing food?

Bedroom

- Is there a sturdy bedside table with a non-tip lamp and space for eyeglasses?
- Is there a clear path between the bathroom and bedroom?
- Do rugs have non-slip backing?
- Is there a comfortable chair with arms for relaxing or comfort when dressing?

Tips

These tips will help you achieve a senior-friendly home.

- Get rid of clutter. Be sure there is a clear path within rooms, and from room to room.
- Use contrasting colors to differentiate between upholstered furniture, walls, and floor covering. Replace door knobs with lever door handles.
- In the kitchen, pick light colors for work surfaces and choose appliances with easy-to-see controls.
- Replace knobs or small handles on cupboards and drawers with larger "C" handles.
- Use the highest wattage allowed in light fixtures and lamps.
- Reposition television and computer screens or use sheer curtains to reduce glare.
- To compensate for poor hearing, use the closed caption feature on the television.
- Use stable outdoor furniture.
- Gardeners with hip or knee problems can try raised-bed or container gardening.
- Install a shelf by the exterior door to set packages on while you unlock the door.

While many improvements can be done by the homeowner, others such as constructing a wheelchair ramp, widening a doorway to accommodate a wheelchair, or installing a roll-in shower, may require a builder or contractor.

For More Information

Contact the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) for information on adapting homes for older people and locating occupational therapy resources: www.aota.org

Information is also available at the AARP website: www.aarp.org

Adapted in part from the series "Aging/Parents & Adult Children Together," produced by the Federal Trade Commission and AARP.



*For more information or a list of titles in this series,
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